Through the Gates of Gold.

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THROUGH THE GATES OF GOLD

A FRAGMENT OF THOUGHT

MABEL COLLINS

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Once, as I sat alone writing, a mysterious Visitor entered my study, unannounced, and stood beside me. I forgot to ask who he was or why he entered so unceremoniously, for he began to tell me of the Gates of Gold. He spoke from knowledge, and from the fire of his speech I caught faith. I have written down his words; but, alas, I cannot hope that the fire shall burn so brightly in my writing as in his speech.

M. C.

THROUGH THE GATES OF GOLD:

A FRAGMENT OF THOUGHT.

PROLOGUE.

Every man has a philosophy of life of his own, except the true philosopher. The most ignorant boor has some conception of his object in living, and definite ideas as to the easiest and wisest way of attaining that object. The man of the world is often, unconsciously to himself, a philosopher of the first rank. He deals with his life on principles of the clearest character, and refuses to let his position be shattered by chance disaster. The man of thought and imagination has less certainty, and finds himself continually unable to formulate his ideas on that subject most profoundly interesting to human nature, — human life itself. The true philosopher is

the one who would lay no claim to the name whatever, who has discovered that the mystery of life is unapproachable by ordinary thought, just as the true scientist confesses his complete ignorance of the principles which lie behind science.

Whether there is any mode of thought or any effort of the mind which will enable a man to grasp the great principles that evidently exist as causes in human life, is a question no ordinary thinker can determine. Yet the dim consciousness that there is cause behind the effects we see, that there is order ruling the chaos and sublime harmony pervading the discords, haunts the eager souls of the earth, and makes them long for vision of the unseen and knowledge of the unknowable.

Why long and look for that which is beyond all hope until the inner eyes are opened? Why not piece together the fragments that we have at hand, and see whether from them some shape cannot be given to the vast puzzle?

CHAPTER I.

THE SEARCH FOR PLEASURE.

I.

We are all acquainted with that stern thing called misery, which pursues man, and strangely enough, as it seems at first, pursues him with no vague or uncertain method, but with a positive and unbroken pertinacity. Its presence is not absolutely continuous, else man must cease to live; but its pertinacity is without any break. There is always the shadowy form of despair standing behind man ready to touch him with its terrible finger if for too long he finds himself content. What has given this ghastly shape the right to haunt us from the hour we are born until the hour we die? What has given it the right to stand always at our door, keeping that door ajar with its impalpable yet plainly

horrible hand, ready to enter at the moment it sees fit? The greatest philosopher that ever lived succumbs before it at last; and he only is a philosopher, in any sane sense, who recognizes the fact that it is irresistible, and knows that like all other men he must suffer soon or late. It is part of the heritage of men, this pain and distress; and he who determines that nothing shall make him suffer, does but cloak himself in a profound and chilly selfishness. This cloak may protect him from pain; it will also separate him from pleasure. If peace is to be found on earth, or any joy in life, it cannot be by closing up the gates of feeling, which admit us to the loftiest and most vivid part of our existence. Sensation, as we obtain it through the physical body, affords us all that induces us to live in that shape. It is inconceivable that any man would care to take the trouble of breathing, unless the act brought with it a sense of satisfaction. So it is with every deed of every instant of our life. We live because it is pleasant

even to have the sensation of pain. It is sensation we desire, else we would with one accord taste of the deep waters of oblivion, and the human race would become extinct. If this is the case in the physical life, it is evidently the case with the life of the emotions, — the imagination, the sensibilities, all those fine and delicate formations which, with the marvellous recording mechanism of the brain, make up the inner or subtile man. Sensation is that which makes their pleasure ; an infinite series of sensations is life to them. Destroy the sensation which makes them wish to persevere in the experiment of living, and there is nothing left. Therefore the man who attempts to obliterate the sense of pain, and who proposes to maintain an equal state whether he is pleased or hurt, strikes at the very root of life, and destroys the object of his own existence. And that must apply, so far as our present reasoning or intuitive powers can show us, to every state, even to that of the Oriental's longed-for Nirvana. This condition can only be one of infinitely

subtiler and more exquisite sensation, if it is a state at all, and not annihilation; and according to the experience of life from which we are at present able to judge, increased subtility of sensation means increased vividness, — as, for instance, a man of sensibility and imagination feels more in consequence of the unfaithfulness or faithfulness of a friend than can a man of even the grossest physical nature feel through the medium of the senses. Thus it is clear that the philosopher who refuses to feel, leaves himself no place to retreat to, not even the distant and unattainable Nirvanic goal. He can only deny himself his heritage of life, which is in other words the right of sensation. If he chooses to sacrifice that which makes him man, he must be content with mere idleness of consciousness, — a condition compared to which the oyster's is a life of excitement.

But no man is able to accomplish such a feat. The fact of his continued existence proves plainly that he still desires sensation, and desires it in such positive and

active form that the desire must be gratified in physical life. It would seem more practical not to deceive one's self by the sham of stoicism, not to attempt renunciation of that with which nothing would induce one to part. Would it not be a bolder policy, a more promising mode of solving the great enigma of existence, to grasp it, to take hold firmly and to demand of it the mystery of itself? If men will but pause and consider what lessons they have learned from pleasure and pain, much might be guessed of that strange thing which causes these effects. But men are prone to turn away hastily from self-study, or from any close analysis of human nature. Yet there must be a science of life as intelligible as any of the methods of the schools. The science is unknown, it is true, and its existence is merely guessed, merely hinted at, by one or two of our more advanced thinkers. The development of a science is only the discovery of what is already in existence; and chemistry is as magical and incredible now to

the ploughboy as the science of life is to the man of ordinary perceptions. Yet there may be, and there must be, a seer who perceives the growth of the new knowledge as the earliest dabblers in the experiments of the laboratory saw the system of knowledge now attained evolving itself out of nature for man's use and benefit.

II.

Doubtless many more would experiment in suicide, as many now do, in order to escape from the burden of life, if they could be convinced that in that manner oblivion might be found. But he who hesitates before drinking the poison from the fear of only inviting change of mode of existence, and perhaps a more active form of misery, is a man of more knowledge than the rash souls who fling themselves wildly on the unknown, trusting to its kindliness. The waters of oblivion are something very different from the waters of death, and the human race cannot become extinct by

means of death while the law of birth still operates. Man returns to physical life as the drunkard returns to the flagon of wine, — he knows not why, except that he desires the sensation produced by life as the drunkard desires the sensation produced by wine. The true waters of oblivion lie far behind our consciousness, and can only be reached by ceasing to exist in that consciousness, — by ceasing to exert the will which makes us full of senses and sensibilities.

Why does not the creature man return into that great womb of silence whence he came, and remain in peace, as the unborn child is at peace before the impetus of life has reached it? He does not do so because he hungers for pleasure and pain, joy and grief, anger and love. The unfortunate man will maintain that he has no desire for life; and yet he proves his words false by living. None can compel him to live; the galley-slave may be chained to his oar, but his life cannot be chained to his body. The superb mechanism of

the human body is as useless as an engine whose fires are not lit, if the will to live ceases, — that will which we maintain resolutely and without pause, and which enables us to perform the tasks which otherwise would fill us with dismay, as, for instance, the momently drawing in and giving out of the breath. Such herculean efforts as this we carry on without complaint, and indeed with pleasure, in order that we may exist in the midst of innumerable sensations.

And more; we are content, for the most part, to go on without object or aim, without any idea of a goal or understanding of which way we are going. When the man first becomes aware of this aimlessness, and is dimly conscious that he is working with great and constant efforts, and without any idea towards what end those efforts are directed, then descends on him the misery of nineteenth-century thought. He is lost and bewildered, and without hope. He becomes sceptical, disillusioned, weary, and asks the apparently unanswerable question

whether it is indeed worth while to draw his breath for such unknown and seemingly unknowable results. But are these results unknowable? At least, to ask a lesser question, is it impossible to make a guess as to the direction in which our goal lies?

III.

This question, born of sadness and weariness, which seems to us essentially part of the spirit of the nineteenth century, is in fact a question which must have been asked all through the ages. Could we go back throughout history intelligently, no doubt we should find that it came always with the hour when the flower of civilization had blown to its full, and when its petals were but slackly held together. The natural part of man has reached then its utmost height; he has rolled the stone up the Hill of Difficulty only to watch it roll back again when the summit is reached, — as in Egypt, in Rome, in Greece. Why this useless labor? Is it not enough to produce

a weariness and sickness unutterable, to be forever accomplishing a task only to see it undone again? Yet that is what man has done throughout history, so far as our limited knowledge reaches. There is one summit to which, by immense and united efforts, he attains, where there is a great and brilliant efflorescence of all the intellectual, mental, and material part of his nature. The climax of sensuous perfection is reached, and then his hold weakens, his power grows less, and he falls back, through despondency and satiety, to barbarism. Why does he not stay on this hill-top he has reached, and look away to the mountains beyond, and resolve to scale those greater heights? Because he is ignorant, and seeing a great glittering in the distance, drops his eyes bewildered and dazzled, and goes back for rest to the shadowy side of his familiar hill. Yet there is now and then one brave enough to gaze fixedly on this glittering, and to decipher something of the shape within it. Poets and philosophers, thinkers and teachers, — all

those who are the "elder brothers of the race," — have beheld this sight from time to time, and some among them have recognized in the bewildering glitter the outlines of the Gates of Gold.

Those Gates admit us to the sanctuary of man's own nature, to the place whence his life-power comes, and where he is priest of the shrine of life. That it is possible to enter here, to pass through those Gates, some one or two have shown us. Plato, Shakspeare, and a few other strong ones have gone through and spoken to us in veiled language on the near side of the Gates. When the strong man has crossed the threshold he speaks no more to those at the other side. And even the words he utters when he is outside are so full of mystery, so veiled and profound, that only those who follow in his steps can see the light within them.

IV.

What men desire is to ascertain how to exchange pain for pleasure; that is, to

find out in what way consciousness may be regulated in order that the sensation which is most agreeable is the one that is experienced. Whether this can be discovered by dint of human thought is at least a question worth considering.

If the mind of man is turned upon any given subject with a sufficient concentration, he obtains illumination with regard to it sooner or later. The particular individual in whom the final illumination appears is called a genius, an inventor, one inspired; but he is only the crown of a great mental work created by unknown men about him, and receding back from him through long vistas of distance. Without them he would not have had his material to deal with. Even the poet requires innumerable poetasters to feed upon. He is the essence of the poetic power of his time, and of the times before him. It is impossible to separate an individual of any species from his kin.

If, therefore, instead of accepting the unknown as unknowable, men were *with one*

accord to turn their thoughts towards it, those Golden Gates would not remain so inexorably shut. It does but need a strong hand to push them open. The courage to enter them is the courage to search the recesses of one's own nature without fear and without shame. In the fine part, the essence, the flavor of the man, is found the key which unlocks those great Gates. And when they open, what is it that is found?

Voices here and there in the long silence of the ages speak to answer that question. Those who have passed through have left words behind them as legacies to others of their kin. In these words we can find definite indications of what is to be looked for beyond the Gates. But only those who desire to go that way read the meaning hidden within the words. Scholars, or rather scholiasts, read the sacred books of different nations, the poetry and the philosophy left by enlightened minds, and find in it all the merest materiality. Imagination glorifying legends of nature, or exaggerating the psychic possibilities of man,

explains to them all that they find in the Bibles of humanity.

What is to be found within the words of those books is to be found in each one of us; and it is impossible to find in literature or through any channel of thought that which does not exist in the man who studies. This is of course an evident fact known to all real students. But it has to be especially remembered in reference to this profound and obscure subject, as men so readily believe that nothing can exist for others where they themselves find emptiness.

One thing is soon perceived by the man who reads: those who have gone before have not found that the Gates of Gold lead to oblivion. On the contrary, sensation becomes real for the first time when that threshold is crossed. But it is of a new order, an order unknown to us now, and by us impossible to appreciate without at least some clew as to its character. This clew can be obtained undoubtedly by any student who cares to go through all the literature accessible to us. That mystic books

and manuscripts exist, but remain inaccessible simply because there is no man ready to read the first page of any one of them, becomes the conviction of all who have studied the subject sufficiently. For there must be the continuous line all through: we see it go from dense ignorance up to intelligence and wisdom; it is only natural that it should go on to intuitive knowledge and to inspiration. Some scant fragments we have of these great gifts of man; where, then, is the whole of which they must be a part? Hidden behind the thin yet seemingly impassable veil which hides it from us as it hid all science, all art, all powers of man till he had the courage to tear away the screen. That courage comes only of conviction. When once man believes that the thing exists which he desires, he will obtain it at any cost. The difficulty in this case lies in man's incredulity. It requires a great tide of thought and attention to set in towards the unknown region of man's nature in order that its gates may be unlocked and its glorious vistas explored.

That it is worth while to do this whatever the hazard may be, all must allow who have asked the sad question of the nineteenth century, — Is life worth living? Surely it is sufficient to spur man to new effort, — the suspicion that beyond civilization, beyond mental culture, beyond art and mechanical perfection, there is a new, another gateway, admitting to the realities of life.

V.

When it seems as if the end was reached, the goal attained, and that man has no more to do, — just then, when he appears to have no choice but between eating and drinking and living in his comfort as the beasts do in theirs, and scepticism which is death, — then it is that in fact, if he will but look, the Golden Gates are before him. With the culture of the age within him and assimilated perfectly, so that he is himself an incarnation of it, then he is fit to attempt the great step which is absolutely possible, yet is attempted by so few even of those

who are fitted for it. It is so seldom attempted, partly because of the profound difficulties which surround it, but much more because man does not realize that this is actually the direction in which pleasure and satisfaction are to be obtained.

There are certain pleasures which appeal to each individual; every man knows that in one layer or another of sensation he finds his chief delight. Naturally he turns to this systematically through life, just as the sunflower turns to the sun and the water-lily leans on the water. But he struggles throughout with an awful fact which oppresses him to the soul, — that no sooner has he obtained his pleasure than he loses it again and has once more to go in search of it. More than that; he never actually reaches it, for it eludes him at the final moment. This is because he endeavors to seize that which is untouchable and satisfy his soul's hunger for sensation by contact with external objects. How can that which is external satisfy or even please the inner man, — the thing which reigns

within and has no eyes for matter, no hands for touch of objects, no senses with which to apprehend that which is outside its magic walls? Those charmed barriers which surround it are limitless, for it is everywhere; it is to be discovered in all living things, and no part of the universe can be conceived of without it, if that universe is regarded as a coherent whole. And unless that point is granted at the outset it is useless to consider the subject of life at all. Life is indeed meaningless unless it is universal and coherent, and unless we maintain our existence by reason of the fact that we are part of that which is, not by reason of our own being.

This is one of the most important factors in the development of man, the recognition — profound and complete recognition — of the law of universal unity and coherence. The separation which exists between individuals, between worlds, between the different poles of the universe and of life, the mental and physical fantasy called space, is a nightmare of the human imagination. That night-

mares exist, and exist only to torment, every child knows; and what we need is the power of discrimination between the phantasmagoria of the brain, which concern ourselves only, and the phantasmagoria of daily life, in which others also are concerned. This rule applies also to the larger case. It concerns no one but ourselves that we live in a nightmare of unreal horror, and fancy ourselves alone in the universe and capable of independent action, so long as our associates are those only who are a part of the dream; but when we desire to speak with those who have tried the Golden Gates and pushed them open, then it is very necessary — in fact it is essential — to discriminate, and not bring into our life the confusions of our sleep. If we do, we are reckoned as madmen, and fall back into the darkness where there is no friend but chaos. This chaos has followed every effort of man that is written in history; after civilization has flowered, the flower falls and dies, and winter and darkness destroy it. While man refuses to make the effort of discrimination

which would enable him to distinguish between the shapes of night and the active figures of day, this must inevitably happen.

But if man has the courage to resist this reactionary tendency, to stand steadily on the height he has reached and put out his foot in search of yet another step, why should he not find it? There is nothing to make one suppose the pathway to end at a certain point, except that tradition which has declared it is so, and which men have accepted and hug to themselves as a justification for their indolence.

VI.

Indolence is, in fact, the curse of man. As the Irish peasant and the cosmopolitan gypsy dwell in dirt and poverty out of sheer idleness, so does the man of the world live contented in sensuous pleasures for the same reason. The drinking of fine wines, the tasting of delicate food, the love of bright sights and sounds, of beautiful

women and admirable surroundings, — these are no better for the cultivated man, no more satisfactory as a final goal of enjoyment for him, than the coarse amusements and gratifications of the boor are for the man without cultivation. There can be no final point, for life in every form is one vast series of fine gradations; and the man who elects to stand still at the point of culture he has reached, and to avow that he can go no further, is simply making an arbitrary statement for the excuse of his indolence. Of course there is a possibility of declaring that the gypsy is content in his dirt and poverty, and, because he is so, is as great a man as the most highly cultured. But he only is so while he is ignorant; the moment light enters the dim mind the whole man turns towards it. So it is on the higher platform; only the difficulty of penetrating the mind, of admitting the light, is even greater. The Irish peasant loves his whiskey, and while he can have it cares nothing for the great laws of morality and religion which are supposed

to govern humanity and induce men to live temperately. The cultivated gourmand cares only for subtle tastes and perfect flavors; but he is as blind as the merest peasant to the fact that there is anything beyond such gratifications. Like the boor he is deluded by a mirage that oppresses his soul; and he fancies, having once obtained a sensuous joy that pleases him, to give himself the utmost satisfaction by endless repetition, till at last he reaches madness. The bouquet of the wine he loves enters his soul and poisons it, leaving him with no thoughts but those of sensuous desire; and he is in the same hopeless state as the man who dies mad with drink. What good has the drunkard obtained by his madness? None; pain has at last swallowed up pleasure utterly, and death steps in to terminate the agony. The man suffers the final penalty for his persistent ignorance of a law of nature as inexorable as that of gravitation, — a law which forbids a man to stand still. Not twice can the same cup of pleasure be tasted; the second time

it must contain either a grain of poison or a drop of the elixir of life.

The same argument holds good with regard to intellectual pleasures; the same law operates. We see men who are the flower of their age in intellect, who pass beyond their fellows and tower over them, entering at last upon a fatal treadmill of thought, where they yield to the innate indolence of the soul and begin to delude themselves by the solace of repetition. Then comes the barrenness and lack of vitality, — that unhappy and disappointing state into which great men too often enter when middle life is just passed. The fire of youth, the vigor of the young intellect, conquers the inner inertia and makes the man scale heights of thought and fill his mental lungs with the free air of the mountains. But then at last the physical reaction sets in; the physical machinery of the brain loses its powerful impetus and begins to relax its efforts, simply because the youth of the body is at an end. Now the man is assailed by the great tempter of the race

who stands forever on the ladder of life waiting for those who climb so far. He drops the poisoned drop into the ear, and from that moment all consciousness takes on a dulness, and the man becomes terrified lest life is losing its possibilities for him. He rushes back on to a familiar platform of experience, and there finds comfort in touching a well-known chord of passion or emotion. And too many having done this linger on, afraid to attempt the unknown, and satisfied to touch continually that chord which responds most readily. By this means they get the assurance that life is still burning within them. But at last their fate is the same as that of the gourmand and the drunkard. The power of the spell lessens daily as the machinery which feels loses its vitality; and the man endeavors to revive the old excitement and fervor by striking the note more violently, by hugging the thing that makes him feel, by drinking the cup of poison to its fatal dregs. And then he is lost; madness falls on his soul, as it falls on the body of the

drunkard. Life has no longer any meaning for him, and he rushes wildly into the abysses of intellectual insanity. A lesser man who commits this great folly wearies the spirits of others by a dull clinging to familiar thought, by a persistent hugging of the treadmill which he asserts to be the final goal. The cloud that surrounds him is as fatal as death itself, and men who once sat at his feet turn away grieved, and have to look back at his early words in order to remember his greatness.

VII.

What is the cure for this misery and waste of effort? Is there one? Surely life itself has a logic in it and a law which makes existence possible; otherwise chaos and madness would be the only state which would be attainable.

When a man drinks his first cup of pleasure his soul is filled with the unutterable joy that comes with a first, a fresh sensation. The drop of poison that he puts

into the second cup, and which, if he persists in that folly, has to become doubled and trebled till at last the whole cup is poison, — that is the ignorant desire for repetition and intensification; this evidently means death, according to all analogy. The child becomes the man; he cannot retain his childhood and repeat and intensify the pleasures of childhood except by paying the inevitable price and becoming an idiot. The plant strikes its roots into the ground and throws up green leaves; then it blossoms and bears fruit. That plant which will only make roots or leaves, pausing persistently in its development, is regarded by the gardener as a thing which is useless and must be cast out.

The man who chooses the way of effort, and refuses to allow the sleep of indolence to dull his soul, finds in his pleasures a new and finer joy each time he tastes them, — a something subtile and remote which removes them more and more from the state in which mere sensuousness is all; this subtile essence is that elixir of life which makes

man immortal. He who tastes it and who will not drink unless it is in the cup finds life enlarge and the world grow great before his eager eyes. He recognizes the soul within the woman he loves, and passion becomes peace; he sees within his thought the finer qualities of spiritual truth, which is beyond the action of our mental machinery, and then instead of entering on the treadmill of intellectualisms he rests on the broad back of the eagle of intuition and soars into the fine air where the great poets found their insight; he sees within his own power of sensation, of pleasure in fresh air and sunshine, in food and wine, in motion and rest, the possibilities of the subtile man, the thing which dies not either with the body or the brain. The pleasures of art, of music, of light and loveliness, — within these forms, which men repeat till they find only the forms, he sees the glory of the Gates of Gold, and passes through to find the new life beyond which intoxicates and strengthens, as the keen mountain air intoxicates and strengthens, by its very

vigor. But if he has been pouring, drop by drop, more and more of the elixir of life into his cup, he is strong enough to breathe this intense air and to live upon it. Then if he die or if he live in physical form, alike he goes on and finds new and finer joys, more perfect and satisfying experiences, with every breath he draws in and gives out.

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERY OF THRESHOLD.

I.

THERE is no doubt that at the entrance on a new phase of life something has to be given up. The child, when it has become the man, puts away childish things. Saint Paul showed in these words, and in many others which he has left us, that he had tasted of the elixir of life, that he was on his way towards the Gates of Gold. With each drop of the divine draught which is put into the cup of pleasure something is purged away from that cup to make room for the magic drop. For Nature deals with her children generously: man's cup is always full to the brim; and if he chooses to taste of the fine and life-giving essence, he must cast away something of the grosser and less sensitive part of himself. This has to be

done daily, hourly, momently, in order that the draught of life may steadily increase. And to do this unflinchingly, a man must be his own schoolmaster, must recognize that he is always in need of wisdom, must be ready to practise any austerities, to use the birch-rod unhesitatingly against himself, in order to gain his end. It becomes evident to any one who regards the subject seriously, that only a man who has the potentialities in him both of the voluptuary and the stoic has any chance of entering the Golden Gates. He must be capable of testing and valuing to its most delicate fraction every joy existence has to give; and he must be capable of denying himself all pleasure, and that without suffering from the denial. When he has accomplished the development of this double possibility, then he is able to begin sifting his pleasures and taking away from his consciousness those which belong absolutely to the man of clay. When those are put back, there is the next range of more refined pleasures to be dealt with. The dealing with these which

will enable a man to find the essence of life is not the method pursued by the stoic philosopher. The stoic does not allow that there is joy within pleasure, and by denying himself the one loses the other. But the true philosopher, who has studied life itself without being bound by any system of thought, sees that the kernel is within the shell, and that, instead of crunching up the whole nut like a gross and indifferent feeder, the essence of the thing is obtained by cracking the shell and casting it away. All emotion, all sensation, lends itself to this process, else it could not be a part of man's development, an essential of his nature. For that there is before him power, life, perfection, and that every portion of his passage thitherwards is crowded with the means of helping him to his goal, can only be denied by those who refuse to acknowledge life as apart from matter. Their mental position is so absolutely arbitrary that it is useless to encounter or combat it. Through all time the unseen has been pressing on the seen, the immaterial over-

powering the material; through all time the signs and tokens of that which is beyond matter have been waiting for the men of matter to test and weigh them. Those who will not do so have chosen the place of pause arbitrarily, and there is nothing to be done but let them remain there undisturbed, working that treadmill which they believe to be the utmost activity of existence.

II.

There is no doubt that a man must educate himself to perceive that which is beyond matter, just as he must educate himself to perceive that which is in matter. Every one knows that the early life of a child is one long process of adjustment, of learning to understand the use of the senses with regard to their special provinces, and of practice in the exercise of difficult, complex, yet imperfect organs entirely in reference to the perception of the world of matter. The child is in earnest and works on without hesitation if he means to live. Some

infants born into the light of earth shrink from it, and refuse to attack the immense task which is before them, and which must be accomplished in order to make life in matter possible. These go back to the ranks of the unborn; we see them lay down their manifold instrument, the body, and fade into sleep. So it is with the great crowd of humanity when it has triumphed and conquered and enjoyed in the world of matter. The individuals in that crowd, which seems so powerful and confident in its familiar demesne, are infants in the presence of the immaterial universe. And we see them, on all sides, daily and hourly, refusing to enter it, sinking back into the ranks of the dwellers in physical life, clinging to the consciousnesses they have experienced and understand. The intellectual rejection of all purely spiritual knowledge is the most marked indication of this indolence, of which thinkers of every standing are certainly guilty.

That the initial effort is a heavy one is evident, and it is clearly a question of

strength, as well as of willing activity. But there is no way of acquiring this strength, or of using it when acquired, except by the exercise of the will. It is vain to expect to be born into great possessions. In the kingdom of life there is no heredity except from the man's own past. He has to accumulate that which is his. This is evident to any observer of life who uses his eyes without blinding them by prejudice; and even when prejudice is present, it is impossible for a man of sense not to perceive the fact. It is from this that we get the doctrine of punishment and salvation, either lasting through great ages after death, or eternal. This doctrine is a narrow and unintelligent mode of stating the fact in Nature that what a man sows that shall he reap. Swedenborg's great mind saw the fact so clearly that he hardened it into a finality in reference to this particular existence, his prejudices making it impossible for him to perceive the possibility of new action when there is no longer the sensuous world to act in. He was too dog-

matic for scientific observation, and would not see that, as the spring follows the autumn, and the day the night, so birth must follow death. He went very near the threshold of the Gates of Gold, and passed beyond mere intellectualism, only to pause at a point but one step farther. The glimpse of the life beyond which he had obtained appeared to him to contain the universe; and on his fragment of experience he built up a theory to include all life, and refused progress beyond that state or any possibility outside it. This is only another form of the weary treadmill. But Swedenborg stands foremost in the crowd of witnesses to the fact that the Golden Gates exist and can be seen from the heights of thought, and he has cast us a faint surge of sensation from their threshold.

III.

When once one has considered the meaning of those Gates, it is evident that there is no other way out of this form of life

except through them. They only can admit man to the place where he becomes the fruit of which manhood is the blossom. Nature is the kindest of mothers to those who need her; she never wearies of her children or desires them to lessen in multitude. Her friendly arms open wide to the vast throng who desire birth and to dwell in forms; and while they continue to desire it, she continues to smile a welcome. Why, then, should she shut her doors on any? When one life in her heart has not worn out a hundredth part of the soul's longing for sensation such as it finds there, what reason can there be for its departure to any other place? Surely the seeds of desire spring up where the sower has sown them. This seems but reasonable; and on this apparently self-evident fact the Indian mind has based its theory of re-incarnation, of birth and re-birth in matter, which has become so familiar a part of Eastern thought as no longer to need demonstration. The Indian knows it as the Western knows that the day he is living through is but one of many days

which make up the span of a man's life. This certainty which is possessed by the Eastern with regard to natural laws that control the great sweep of the soul's existence is simply acquired by habits of thought. The mind of many is fixed on subjects which in the West are considered unthinkable. Thus it is that the East has produced the great flowers of the spiritual growth of humanity. On the mental steps of a million men Buddha passed through the Gates of Gold; and because a great crowd pressed about the threshold he was able to leave behind him words which prove that those Gates will open.

CHAPTER III.

THE INITIAL EFFORT.

I.

It is very easily seen that there is no one point in a man's life or experience where he is nearer the soul of things than at any other. That soul, the sublime essence, which fills the air with a burnished glow, is there, behind the Gates it colors with itself. But that there is no one pathway to it is immediately perceived from the fact that this soul must from its very nature be universal. The Gates of Gold do not admit to any special place; what they do is to open for egress from a special place. Man passes through them when he casts off his limitation. He may burst the shell that holds him in darkness, tear the veil that hides him from the eternal, at any point where it is easiest for him

to do so; and most often this point will be where he least expects to find it. Men go in search of escape with the help of their minds, and lay down arbitrary and limited laws as to how to attain the, to them, unattainable. Many, indeed, have hoped to pass through by the way of religion, and instead they have formed a place of thought and feeling so marked and fixed that it seems as though long ages would be insufficient to enable them to get out of the rut. Some have believed that by the aid of pure intellect a way was to be found; and to such men we owe the philosophy and metaphysics which have prevented the race from sinking into utter sensuousness. But the end of the man who endeavors to live by thought alone is that he dwells in fantasies, and insists on giving them to other men as substantial food. Great is our debt to the metaphysicians and transcendentalists; but he who follows them to the bitter end, forgetting that the brain is only one organ of use, will find himself dwelling in a place where a dull wheel of argument

seems to turn forever on its axis, yet goes nowhither and carries no burden.

Virtue (or what seems to each man to be virtue, his own special standard of morality and purity) is held by those who practise it to be a way to heaven. Perhaps it is, to the heaven of the modern sybarite, the ethical voluptuary. It is as easy to become a gourmand in pure living and high thinking as in the pleasures of taste or sight or sound. Gratification is the aim of the virtuous man as well as of the drunkard; even if his life be a miracle of abstinence and self-sacrifice, a moment's thought shows that in pursuing this apparently heroic path he does but pursue pleasure. With him pleasure takes on a lovely form because his gratifications are those of a sweet savor, and it pleases him to give gladness to others rather than to enjoy himself at their expense. But the pure life and high thoughts are no more finalities in themselves than any other mode of enjoyment; and the man who endeavors to find contentment in them must intensify his effort and

continually repeat it, — all in vain. He is a green plant indeed, and the leaves are beautiful; but more is wanted than leaves. If he persists in his endeavor blindly, believing that he has reached his goal when he has not even perceived it, then he finds himself in that dreary place where good is done perforce, and the deed of virtue is without the love that should shine through it. It is well for a man to lead a pure life, as it is well for him to have clean hands, — else he becomes repugnant. But virtue as we understand it now can no more have any special relation to the state beyond that to which we are limited than any other part of our constitution. Spirit is not a gas created by matter, and we cannot create our future by forcibly using one material agent and leaving out the rest. Spirit is the great life on which matter rests, as does the rocky world on the free and fluid ether; whenever we can break our limitations we find ourselves on that marvellous shore where Wordsworth once saw the gleam of the gold. When we enter there all the

present must disappear alike,—virtue and vice, thought and sense. That a man reaps what he has sown must of course be true also; he has no power to carry virtue, which is of the material life, with him; yet the aroma of his good deeds is a far sweeter sacrifice than the odor of crime and cruelty. Yet it may be, however, that by the practice of virtue he will fetter himself into one groove, one changeless fashion of life in matter, so firmly that it is impossible for the mind to conceive that death is a sufficient power to free him, and cast him upon the broad and glorious ocean,—a sufficient power to undo for him the inexorable and heavy latch of the Golden Gate. And sometimes the man who has sinned so deeply that his whole nature is scarred and blackened by the fierce fire of selfish gratification is at last so utterly burned out and charred that from the very vigor of the passion light leaps forth. It would seem more possible for such a man at least to reach the threshold of the Gates than for the mere ascetic or philosopher.

But it is little use to reach the threshold of the Gates without the power to pass through. And that is all that the sinner can hope to do by the dissolution of himself which comes from seeing his own soul. At least this appears to be so, inevitably because his condition is negative. The man who lifts the latch of the Golden Gate must do so with his own strong hand, must be absolutely positive. This we can see by analogy. In everything else in life, in every new step or development, it is necessary for a man to exercise his most dominant will in order to obtain it fully. Indeed in many cases, though he has every advantage and though he use his will to some extent, he will fail utterly of obtaining what he desires from lack of the final and unconquerable resolution. No education in the world will make a man an intellectual glory to his age, even if his powers are great; for unless he positively desires to seize the flower of perfection, he will be but a dry scholar, a dealer in words, a proficient in mechanical thought, and a mere wheel

of memory. And the man who has this positive quality in him will rise in spite of adverse circumstances, will recognize and seize upon the tide of thought which is his natural food, and will stand as a giant at last in the place he willed to reach. We see this practically every day in all walks of life. Wherefore it does not seem possible that the man who has simply succeeded through the passions in wrecking the dogmatic and narrow part of his nature should pass through those great Gates. But as he is not blinded by prejudice, nor has fastened himself to any treadmill of thought, nor caught the wheel of his soul in any deep rut of life, it would seem that if once the positive will might be born within him, he could at some time not hopelessly far distant lift his hand to the latch.

Undoubtedly it is the hardest task we have yet seen set us in life, that which we are now talking of, — to free a man of all prejudice, of all crystallized thought or feeling, of all limitations, yet develop within him the positive will. It seems too much

of a miracle; for in ordinary life positive will is always associated with crystallized ideas. But many things which have appeared to be too much of a miracle for accomplishment have yet been done, even in the narrow experience of life given to our present humanity. All the past shows us that difficulty is no excuse for dejection, much less for despair; else the world would have been without the many wonders of civilization. Let us consider the thing more seriously, therefore, having once used our minds to the idea that it is not impossible.

The great initial difficulty is that of fastening the interest on that which is unseen. Yet this is done every day, and we have only to observe how it is done in order to guide our own conduct. Every inventor fastens his interest firmly on the unseen; and it entirely depends on the firmness of that attachment whether he is successful or whether he fails. The poet who looks on to his moment of creation as that for which he lives, sees that which is invisible and hears that which is soundless.

Probably in this last analogy there is a clew as to the mode by which success in this voyage to the unknown bourn ("whence," indeed, "no traveller returns") is attained. It applies also to the inventor and to all who reach out beyond the ordinary mental and psychical level of humanity. The clew lies in that word "creation."

II.

The words "to create" are often understood by the ordinary mind to convey the idea of evolving something out of nothing. This is clearly not its meaning; we are mentally obliged to provide our Creator with chaos from which to produce the worlds. The tiller of the soil, who is the typical producer of social life, must have his material, his earth, his sky, rain, and sun, and the seeds to place within the earth. Out of nothing he can produce nothing. Out of a void Nature cannot arise; there is that material beyond, be-

hind, or within, from which she is shaped by our desire for a universe. It is an evident fact that the seeds and the earth, air, and water which cause them to germinate exist on every plane of action. If you talk to an inventor, you will find that far ahead of what he is now doing he can always perceive some other thing to be done which he cannot express in words because as yet he has not drawn it into our present world of objects. That knowledge of the unseen is even more definite in the poet, and more inexpressible until he has touched it with some part of that consciousness which he shares with other men. But in strict proportion to his greatness he lives in the consciousness which the ordinary man does not even believe can exist, — the consciousness which dwells in the greater universe, which breathes in the vaster air, which beholds a wider earth and sky, and snatches seeds from plants of giant growth.

It is this place of consciousness that we need to reach out to. That it is not reserved only for men of genius is shown

by the fact that martyrs and heroes have found it and dwelt in it. It is not reserved for men of genius only, but it can only be found by men of great soul.

In this fact there is no need for discouragement. Greatness in man is popularly supposed to be a thing inborn. This belief must be a result of want of thought, of blindness to facts of nature. Greatness can only be attained by growth; that is continually demonstrated to us. Even the mountains, even the firm globe itself, these are great by dint of the mode of growth peculiar to that state of materiality, — accumulation of atoms. As the consciousness inherent in all existing forms passes into more advanced forms of life it becomes more active, and in proportion it acquires the power of growth by assimilation instead of accumulation. Looking at existence from this special point of view (which indeed is a difficult one to maintain for long, as we habitually look at life in planes and forget the great lines which connect and run through these), we immediately per-

ceive it to be reasonable to suppose that as we advance beyond our present standpoint the power of growth by assimilation will become greater and probably change into a method yet more rapid, easy, and unconscious. The universe is, in fact, full of magnificent promise for us, if we will but lift our eyes and see. It is that lifting of the eyes which is the first need and the first difficulty; we are so apt readily to be content with what we see within touch of our hands. It is the essential characteristic of the man of genius that he is comparatively indifferent to that fruit which is just within touch, and hungers for that which is afar on the hills. In fact he does not need the sense of contact to arouse longing. He knows that this distant fruit, which he perceives without the aid of the physical senses, is a subtler and a stronger food than any which appeals to them. And how is he rewarded! When he tastes that fruit, how strong and sweet is its flavor, and what a new sense of life rushes upon him! For in recognizing that flavor he has recog-

nized the existence of the subtile senses, those which feed the life of the inner man; and it is by the strength of that inner man, and by his strength only, that the latch of the Golden Gates can be lifted.

In fact it is only by the development and growth of the inner man that the existence of these Gates, and of that to which they admit, can be even perceived. While man is content with his gross senses and cares nothing for his subtile ones, the Gates remain literally invisible. As to the boor the gateway of the intellectual life is as a thing uncreate and non-existent, so to the man of the gross senses, even if his intellectual life is active, that which lies beyond is uncreate and non-existent, only because he does not open the book.

To the servant who dusts the scholar's library the closed volumes are meaningless; they do not even appear to contain a promise unless he also is a scholar, not merely a servant. It is possible to gaze throughout eternity upon a shut exterior from sheer indolence, — mental indolence, which is in-

credulity, and which at last men learn to pride themselves on; they call it scepticism, and talk of the reign of reason. It is no more a state to justify pride than that of the Eastern sybarite who will not even lift his food to his mouth; he is "reasonable" also in that he sees no value in activity, and therefore does not exercise it. So with the sceptic; decay follows the condition of inaction, whether it be mental, psychic, or physical.

III.

And now let us consider how the initial difficulty of fastening the interest on that which is unseen is to be overcome. Our gross senses refer only to that which is objective in the ordinary sense of the word; but just beyond this field of life there are finer sensations which appeal to finer senses. Here we find the first clew to the stepping-stones we need. Man looks from this point of view like a point where many rays or lines centre; and if he has the courage or

the interest to detach himself from the simplest form of life, the point, and explore but a little way along these lines or rays, his whole being at once inevitably widens and expands, the man begins to grow in greatness. But it is evident, if we accept this illustration as a fairly true one, that the chief point of importance is to explore no more persistently on one line than another; else the result must be a deformity. We all know how powerful is the majesty and personal dignity of a forest tree which has had air enough to breathe, and room for its widening roots, and inner vitality with which to accomplish its unceasing task. It obeys the perfect natural law of growth, and the peculiar awe it inspires arises from this fact.

How is it possible to obtain recognition of the inner man, to observe its growth and foster it?

Let us try to follow a little way the clew we have obtained, though words will probably soon be useless.

We must each travel alone and without

aids, as the traveller has to climb alone when he nears the summit of the mountain. No beast of burden can help him there; neither can the gross senses or anything that touches the gross senses help him here. But for a little distance words may go with us.

The tongue recognizes the value of sweetness or piquancy in food. To the man whose senses are of the simplest order there is no other idea of sweetness than this. But a finer essence, a more highly placed sensation of the same order, is reached by another perception. The sweetness on the face of a lovely woman, or in the smile of a friend, is recognized by the man whose inner senses have even a little — a mere stirring of — vitality. To the one who has lifted the golden latch the spring of sweet waters, the fountain itself whence all softness arises, is opened and becomes part of his heritage.

But before this fountain can be tasted, or any other spring reached, any source found, a heavy weight has to be lifted

from the heart, an iron bar which holds it down and prevents it from arising in its strength.

The man who recognizes the flow of sweetness from its source through Nature, through all forms of life, he has lifted this, he has raised himself into that state in which there is no bondage. He knows that he is a part of the great whole, and it is this knowledge which is his heritage. It is through the breaking asunder of the arbitrary bond which holds him to his personal centre that he comes of age and becomes ruler of his kingdom. As he widens out, reaching by manifold experience along those lines which centre at the point where he stands embodied, he discovers that he has touch with all life, that he contains within himself the whole. And then he has but to yield himself to the great force which we call good, to clasp it tightly with the grasp of his soul, and he is carried swiftly on to the great, wide waters of real living. What are those waters? In our present life we have but the shadow of the substance. No man

loves without satiety, no man drinks wine without return of thirst. Hunger and longing darken the sky and make the earth unfriendly. What we need is an earth that will bear living fruit, a sky that will be always full of light. Needing this positively, we shall surely find it.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MEANING OF PAIN.

I.

Look into the deep heart of life, whence pain comes to darken men's lives. She is always on the threshold, and behind her stands despair.

What are these two gaunt figures, and why are they permitted to be our constant followers?

It is we who permit them, we who order them, as we permit and order the action of our bodies; and we do so as unconsciously. But by scientific experiment and investigation we have learned much about our physical life, and it would seem as if we can obtain at least as much result with regard to our inner life by adopting similar methods.

Pain arouses, softens, breaks, and destroys. Regarded from a sufficiently removed standpoint, it appears as medicine, as a knife, as a weapon, as a poison, in turn. It is an implement, a thing which is used, evidently. What we desire to discover is, who is the user; what part of ourselves is it that demands the presence of this thing so hateful to the rest?

Medicine is used by the physician, the knife by the surgeon; but the weapon of destruction is used by the enemy, the hater.

Is it, then, that we do not only use means, or desire to use means, for the benefit of our souls, but that also we wage warfare within ourselves, and do battle in the inner sanctuary? It would seem so; for it is certain that if man's will relaxed with regard to it he would no longer retain life in that state in which pain exists. Why does he desire his own hurt?

The answer may at first sight seem to be that he primarily desires pleasure, and so is willing to continue on that battlefield where

it wages war with pain for the possession of him, hoping always that pleasure will win the victory and take him home to herself. This is but the external aspect of the man's state. In himself he knows well that pain is co-ruler with pleasure, and that though the war wages always it never will be won. The superficial observer concludes that man submits to the inevitable. But that is a fallacy not worthy of discussion. A little serious thought shows us that man does not exist at all except by exercise of his positive qualities; it is but logical to suppose that he chooses the state he will live in by the exercise of those same qualities.

Granted, then, for the sake of our argument, that he desires pain, why is it that he desires anything so annoying to himself?

II.

If we carefully consider the constitution of man and its tendencies, it would seem as if there were two definite directions in

which he grows. He is like a tree which strikes its roots into the ground while it throws up young branches towards the heavens. These two lines which go outward from the central personal point are to him clear, definite, and intelligible. He calls one good and the other evil. But man is not, according to any analogy, observation, or experience, a straight line. Would that he were, and that life, or progress, or development, or whatever we choose to call it, meant merely following one straight road or another, as the religionists pretend it does. The whole question, the mighty problem, would be very easily solved then. But it is not so easy to go to hell as preachers declare it to be. It is as hard a task as to find one's way to the Golden Gate. A man may wreck himself utterly in sense-pleasure, — may debase his whole nature, as it seems, — yet he fails of becoming the perfect devil, for there is still the spark of divine light within him. He tries to choose the broad road which leads to destruction, and enters bravely on

his headlong career. But very soon he is checked and startled by some unthought-of tendency in himself, — some of the many other radiations which go forth from his centre of self. He suffers as the body suffers when it develops monstrosities which impede its healthy action. He has created pain, and encountered his own creation. It may seem as if this argument is difficult of application with regard to physical pain. Not so, if man is regarded from a loftier standpoint than that we generally occupy. If he is looked upon as a powerful consciousness which forms its external manifestations according to its desires, then it is evident that physical pain results from deformity in those desires. No doubt it will appear to many minds that this conception of man is too gratuitous, and involves too large a mental leap into unknown places where proof is unobtainable. But if the mind is accustomed to look upon life from this standpoint, then very soon none other is acceptable; the threads of existence, which to the purely materialistic observer appear

hopelessly entangled, become separated and straightened, so that a new intelligibleness illumines the universe. The arbitrary and cruel Creator who inflicts pain and pleasure at will then disappears from the stage; and it is well, for he is indeed an unnecessary character, and, worse still, is a mere creature of straw, who cannot even strut upon the boards without being upheld on all sides by dogmatists. Man comes into this world, surely, on the same principle that he lives in one city of the earth or another; at all events, if it is too much to say that this is so, one may safely ask, why is it not so? There is neither for nor against which will appeal to the materialist, or which would weigh in a court of justice; but I aver this in favor of the argument, — that no man having once seriously considered it can go back to the formal theories of the sceptics. It is like putting on swaddling-clothes again.

Granting, then, for the sake of this argument, that man is a powerful consciousness who is his own creator, his own judge, and within whom lies all life in potentiality,

even the ultimate goal, then let us consider why he causes himself to suffer.

If pain is the result of uneven development, of monstrous growths, of defective advance at different points, why does man not learn the lesson which this should teach him, and take pains to develop equally?

It would seem to me as if the answer to this question is that this is the very lesson which the human race is engaged in learning. Perhaps this may seem too bold a statement to make in the face of ordinary thinking, which either regards man as a creature of chance dwelling in chaos, or as a soul bound to the inexorable wheel of a tyrant's chariot and hurried on either to heaven or to hell. But such a mode of thought is after all but the same as that of the child who regards his parents as the final arbiters of his destinies, and in fact the gods or demons of his universe. As he grows he casts aside this idea, finding that it is simply a question of coming of age, and that he is himself the king of life like any other man.

So it is with the human race. It is king of its world, arbiter of its own destiny, and there is none to say it nay. Who talk of Providence and chance have not paused to think.

Destiny, the inevitable, does indeed exist for the race and for the individual; but who can ordain this save the man himself? There is no clew in heaven or earth to the existence of any ordainer other than the man who suffers or enjoys that which is ordained. We know so little of our own constitution, we are so ignorant of our divine functions, that it is impossible for us yet to know how much or how little we are actually fate itself. But this at all events we know,—that so far as any provable perception goes, no clew to the existence of an ordainer has yet been discovered; whereas if we give but a very little attention to the life about us in order to observe the action of the man upon his own future, we soon perceive this power as an actual force in operation. It is visible, although our range of vision is so very limited.

The man of the world, pure and simple, is by far the best practical observer and philosopher with regard to life, because he is not blinded by any prejudices. He will be found always to believe that as a man sows so shall he reap. And this is so evidently true when it is considered, that if one takes the larger view, including all human life, it makes intelligible the awful Nemesis which seems consciously to pursue the human race, — that inexorable appearance of pain in the midst of pleasure. The great Greek poets saw this apparition so plainly that their recorded observation has given to us younger and blinder observers the idea of it. It is unlikely that so materialistic a race as that which has grown up all over the West would have discovered for itself the existence of this terrible factor in human life without the assistance of the older poets, — the poets of the past. And in this we may notice, by the way, one distinct value of the study of the classics, — that the great ideas and facts about human life which the superb ancients put into their

poetry shall not be absolutely lost as are their arts. No doubt the world will flower again, and greater thoughts and more profound discoveries than those of the past will be the glory of the men of the future efflorescence; but until that far-off day comes we cannot prize too dearly the treasures left us.

There is one aspect of the question which seems at first sight positively to negative this mode of thought; and that is the suffering in the apparently purely physical body of the dumb beings, — young children, idiots, animals, — and their desperate need of the power which comes of any sort of knowledge to help them through their sufferings.

The difficulty which will arise in the mind with regard to this comes from the untenable idea of the separation of the soul from the body. It is supposed by all those who look only at material life (and especially by the physicians of the flesh) that the body and the brain are a pair of partners who live together hand in hand and

react one upon another. Beyond that they recognize no cause and therefore allow of none. They forget that the brain and the body are as evidently mere mechanism as the hand or the foot. There is the inner man — the soul — behind, using all these mechanisms; and this is as evidently the truth with regard to all the existences we know of as with regard to man himself. We cannot find any point in the scale of being at which soul-causation ceases or can cease. The dull oyster must have that in him which makes him choose the inactive life he leads; none else can choose it for him but the soul behind, which makes him be. How else can he be where he is, or be at all? Only by the intervention of an impossible creator called by some name or other.

It is because man is so idle, so indisposed to assume or accept responsibility, that he falls back upon this temporary makeshift of a creator. It is temporary indeed, for it can only last during the activity of the particular brain power which finds its place

among us. When the man drops this mental life behind him, he of necessity leaves with it its magic lantern and the pleasant illusions he has conjured up by its aid. That must be a very uncomfortable moment, and must produce a sense of nakedness not to be approached by any other sensation. It would seem as well to save one's self this disagreeable experience by refusing to accept unreal phantasms as things of flesh and blood and power. Upon the shoulders of the Creator man likes to thrust the responsibility not only of his capacity for sinning and the possibility of his salvation, but of his very life itself, his very consciousness. It is a poor Creator that he thus contents himself with, — one who is pleased with a universe of puppets, and amused by pulling their strings. If he is capable of such enjoyment, he must yet be in his infancy. Perhaps that is so, after all; the God within us is in his infancy, and refuses to recognize his high estate. If indeed the soul of man is subject to the laws of growth, of decay, and of re-birth as

to its body, then there is no wonder at its blindness. But this is evidently not so; for the soul of man is of that order of life which causes shape and form, and is unaffected itself by these things,— of that order of life which like the pure, the abstract flame burns wherever it is lit. This cannot be changed or affected by time, and is of its very nature superior to growth and decay. It stands in that primeval place which is the only throne of God, — that place whence forms of life emerge and to which they return. That place is the central point of existence, where there is a permanent spot of life as there is in the midst of the heart of man. It is by the equal development of that, — first by the recognition of it, and then by its equal development upon the many radiating lines of experience, — that man is at last enabled to reach the Golden Gate and lift the latch. The process is the gradual recognition of the god in himself; the goal is reached when that godhood is consciously restored to its right glory.

III.

The first thing which it is necessary for the soul of man to do in order to engage in this great endeavor of discovering true life is the same thing that the child first does in its desire for activity in the body, — he must be able to stand. It is clear that the power of standing, of equilibrium, of concentration, of uprightness, in the soul, is a quality of a marked character. The word that presents itself most readily as descriptive of this quality is "confidence."

To remain still amid life and its changes, and stand firmly on the chosen spot, is a feat which can only be accomplished by the man who has confidence in himself and in his destiny. Otherwise the hurrying forms of life, the rushing tide of men, the great floods of thought, must inevitably carry him with them, and then he will lose that place of consciousness whence it was possible to start on the great enterprise. For it *must* be done knowingly, and without pressure from without, — this act of the

new-born man. All the great ones of the earth have possessed this confidence, and have stood firmly on that place which was to them the one solid spot in the universe. To each man this place is of necessity different. Each man must find his own earth and his own heaven.

We have the instinctive desire to relieve pain, but we work in externals in this as in everything else. We simply alleviate it; and if we do more, and drive it from its first chosen stronghold, it reappears in some other place with reinforced vigor. If it is eventually driven off the physical plane by persistent and successful effort, it reappears on the mental or emotional planes where no man can touch it. That this is so is easily seen by those who connect the various planes of sensation, and who observe life with that additional illumination. Men habitually regard these different forms of feeling as actually separate, whereas in fact they are evidently only different sides of one centre, — the point of personality. If that which arises in the

centre, the fount of life, demands some hindered action, and consequently causes pain, the force thus created being driven from one stronghold must find another; it cannot be driven out. And all the blendings of human life which cause emotion and distress exist for its use and purposes as well as for those of pleasure. Both have their home in man; both demand their expression of right. The marvellously delicate mechanism of the human frame is constructed to answer to their lightest touch; the extraordinary intricacies of human relations evolve themselves, as it were, for the satisfaction of these two great opposites of the soul.

Pain and pleasure stand apart and separate, as do the two sexes; and it is in the merging, the making the two into one, that joy and deep sensation and profound peace are obtained. Where there is neither male nor female, neither pain nor pleasure, there is the god in man dominant, and then is life real.

To state the matter in this way may

savor too much of the dogmatist who utters his assertions uncontradicted from a safe pulpit; but it is dogmatism only as a scientist's record of effort in a new direction is dogmatism. Unless the existence of the Gates of Gold can be proved to be real, and not the mere phantasmagoria of fanciful visionaries, then they are not worth talking about at all. In the nineteenth century hard facts or legitimate arguments alone appeal to men's minds; and so much the better. For unless the life we advance towards is increasingly real and actual, it is worthless, and time is wasted in going after it. Reality is man's greatest need, and he demands to have it at all hazards, at any price. Be it so. No one doubts he is right. Let us then go in search of reality.

IV.

One definite lesson learned by all acute sufferers will be of the greatest service to us in this consideration. In intense pain a

point is reached where it is indistinguishable from its opposite, pleasure. This is indeed so, but few have the heroism or the strength to suffer to such a far point. It is as difficult to reach it by the other road. Only a chosen few have the gigantic capacity for pleasure which will enable them to travel to its other side. Most have but enough strength to enjoy and to become the slave of the enjoyment. Yet man has undoubtedly within himself the heroism needed for the great journey; else how is it that martyrs have smiled amid the torture? How is it that the profound sinner who lives for pleasure can at last feel stir within himself the divine afflatus?

In both these cases the possibility has arisen of finding the way; but too often that possibility is killed by the overbalance of the startled nature. The martyr has acquired a passion for pain and lives in the idea of heroic suffering; the sinner becomes blinded by the thought of virtue and worships it as an end, an object, a thing divine in itself; whereas it can only

be divine as it is part of that infinite whole which includes vice as well as virtue. How is it possible to divide the infinite, — that which is one? It is as reasonable to lend divinity to any object as to take a cup of water from the sea and declare that in that is contained the ocean. You cannot separate the ocean; the salt water is part of the great sea and must be so; but nevertheless you do not hold the sea in your hand. Men so longingly desire personal power that they are ready to put infinity into a cup, the divine idea into a formula, in order that they may fancy themselves in possession of it. These only are those who cannot rise and approach the Gates of Gold, for the great breath of life confuses them; they are struck with horror to find how great it is. The idol-worshipper keeps an image of his idol in his heart and burns a candle always before it. It is his own, and he is pleased at that thought, even if he bow in reverence before it. In how many virtuous and religious men does not this same state exist? In the recesses of

the soul the lamp is burning before a household god, — a thing possessed by its worshipper and subject to him. Men cling with desperate tenacity to these dogmas, these moral laws, these principles and modes of faith which are their household gods, their personal idols. Bid them burn the unceasing flame in reverence only to the infinite, and they turn from you. Whatever their manner of scorning your protest may be, within themselves it leaves a sense of aching void. For the noble soul of the man, that potential king which is within us all, knows full well that this household idol may be cast down and destroyed at any moment, — that it is without finality in itself, without any real and absolute life. And he has been content in his possession, forgetting that anything possessed can only by the immutable laws of life be held temporarily. He has forgotten that the infinite is his only friend; he has forgotten that in its glory is his only home, — that it alone can be his god. There he feels as if he is homeless; but that amid

the sacrifices he offers to his own especial idol there is for him a brief resting-place; and for this he clings passionately to it.

Few have the courage even slowly to face the great desolateness which lies outside themselves, and must lie there so long as they cling to the person which they represent, the "I" which is to them the centre of the world, the cause of all life. In their longing for a God they find the reason for the existence of one; in their desire for a sense-body and a world to enjoy in, lies to them the cause of the universe. These beliefs may be hidden very deep beneath the surface, and be indeed scarcely accessible; but in the fact that they are there is the reason why the man holds himself upright. To himself he is himself the infinite and the God; he holds the ocean in a cup. In this delusion he nurtures the egoism which makes life pleasure and makes pain pleasant. In this profound egoism is the very cause and source of the existence of pleasure and of pain. For unless man

vacillated between these two, and ceaselessly reminded himself by sensation that he exists, he would forget it. And in this fact lies the whole answer to the question, "Why does man create pain for his own discomfort?"

The strange and mysterious fact remains unexplained as yet, that man in so deluding himself is merely interpreting Nature backwards and putting into the words of death the meaning of life. For that man does indeed hold within him the infinite, and that the ocean is really in the cup, is an incontestable truth; but it is only so because the cup is absolutely non-existent. It is merely an experience of the infinite, having no permanence, liable to be shattered at any instant. It is in the claiming of reality and permanence for the four walls of his personality, that man makes the vast blunder which plunges him into a prolonged series of unfortunate incidents, and intensifies continually the existence of his favorite forms of sensation. Pleasure and pain become to him more real than

the great ocean of which he is a part and where his home is; he perpetually knocks himself painfully against these walls where he feels, and his tiny self oscillates within his chosen prison.

CHAPTER V.

THE SECRET OF STRENGTH.

I.

STRENGTH to step forward is the primary need of him who has chosen his path. Where is this to be found? Looking round, it is not hard to see where other men find their strength. Its source is profound conviction. Through this great moral power is brought to birth in the natural life of the man that which enables him, however frail he may be, to go on and conquer. Conquer what? Not continents, not worlds, but himself. Through that supreme victory is obtained the entrance to the whole, where all that might be conquered and obtained by effort becomes at once not his, but himself.

To put on armor and go forth to war, taking the chances of death in the hurry

of the fight, is an easy thing; to stand still amid the jangle of the world, to preserve stillness within the turmoil of the body, to hold silence amid the thousand cries of the senses and desires, and then, stripped of all armor and without hurry or excitement take the deadly serpent of self and kill it, is no easy thing. Yet that is what has to be done; and it can only be done in the moment of equilibrium when the enemy is disconcerted by the silence.

But there is needed for this supreme moment a strength such as no hero of the battlefield needs. A great soldier must be filled with the profound convictions of the justness of his cause and the rightness of his method. The man who wars against himself and wins the battle can do it only when he knows that in that war he is doing the one thing which is worth doing, and when he knows that in doing it he is winning heaven and hell as his servitors. Yes, he stands on both. He needs no heaven where pleasure comes as a long-promised reward; he fears no

hell where pain waits to punish him for his sins. For he has conquered once for all that shifting serpent in himself which turns from side to side in its constant desire of contact, in its perpetual search after pleasure and pain. Never again (the victory once really won) can he tremble or grow exultant at any thought of that which the future holds. Those burning sensations which seemed to him to be the only proofs of his existence are his no longer. How, then, can he know that he lives? He knows it only by argument. And in time he does not care to argue about it. For him there is then peace; and he will find in that peace the power he has coveted. Then he will know what is that faith which can remove mountains.

II.

Religion holds a man back from the path, prevents his stepping forward, for various very plain reasons. First, it makes the

vital mistake of distinguishing between good and evil. Nature knows no such distinction; and the moral and social laws set us by our religions are as temporary, as much a thing of our own special mode and form of existence, as are the moral and social laws of the ants or the bees. We pass out of that state in which these things appear to be final, and we forget them forever. This is easily shown, because a man of broad habits of thought and of intelligence must modify his code of life when he dwells among another people. These people among whom he is an alien have their own deep-rooted religions and hereditary convictions, against which he cannot offend. Unless his is an abjectly narrow and unthinking mind, he sees that their form of law and order is as good as his own. What then can he do but reconcile his conduct gradually to their rules? And then if he dwells among them many years the sharp edge of difference is worn away, and he forgets at last where their faith ends and his commences. Yet is it for his own

people to say he has done wrong, if he has injured no man and remained just?

I am not attacking law and order; I do not speak of these things with rash dislike. In their place they are as vital and necessary as the code which governs the life of a beehive is to its successful conduct. What I wish to point out is that law and order in themselves are quite temporary and unsatisfactory. When a man's soul passes away from its brief dwelling-place, thoughts of law and order do not accompany it. If it is strong, it is the ecstasy of true being and real life which it becomes possessed of, as all know who have watched by the dying. If the soul is weak, it faints and fades away, overcome by the first flush of the new life.

Am I speaking too positively? Only those who live in the active life of the moment, who have not watched beside the dead and dying, who have not walked the battlefield and looked in the faces of men in their last agony, will say so. The strong man goes forth from his body exultant.

Why? Because he is no longer held back and made to quiver by hesitation. In the strange moment of death he has had release given him; and with a sudden passion of delight he recognizes that it is release. Had he been sure of this before, he would have been a great sage, a man to rule the world, for he would have had the power to rule himself and his own body. That release from the chains of ordinary life can be obtained as easily during life as by death. It only needs a sufficiently profound conviction to enable the man to look on his body with the same emotions as he would look on the body of another man, or on the bodies of a thousand men. In contemplating a battlefield it is impossible to realize the agony of every sufferer; why, then, realize your own pain more keenly than another's? Mass the whole together, and look at it all from a wider standpoint than that of the individual life. That you actually feel your own physical wound is a weakness of your limitation. The man who is developed psychi-

cally feels the wound of another as keenly as his own, and does not feel his own at all if he is strong enough to will it so. Every one who has examined at all seriously into psychic conditions knows this to be a fact, more or less marked, according to the psychic development. In many instances the psychic is more keenly and selfishly aware of his own pain than of any other person's; but that is when the development, marked perhaps so far as it has gone, only reaches a certain point. It is the power which carries the man to the margin of that consciousness which is profound peace and vital activity. It can carry him no further. But if he has reached its margin he is freed from the paltry dominion of his own self. That is the first great release. Look at the sufferings which come upon us from our narrow and limited experience and sympathy. We each stand quite alone, a solitary unit, a pygmy in the world. What good fortune can we expect? The great life of the world rushes by, and we are in danger each instant that it will overwhelm

us or even utterly destroy us. There is no defence to be offered to it; no opposition army can be set up, because in this life every man fights his own battle against every other man, and no two can be united under the same banner. There is only one way of escape from this terrible danger which we battle against every hour. Turn round, and instead of standing against the forces, join them; become one with Nature, and go easily upon her path. Do not resist or resent the circumstances of life any more than the plants resent the rain and the wind. Then suddenly, to your own amazement, you find you have time and strength to spare, to use in the great battle which it is inevitable every man must fight, — that in himself, that which leads to his own conquest.

Some might say, to his own destruction. And why? Because from the hour when he first tastes the splendid reality of living he forgets more and more his individual self. No longer does he fight for it, or pit its strength against the strength of others.

No longer does he care to defend or to feed it. Yet when he is thus indifferent to its welfare, the individual self grows more stalwart and robust, like the prairie grasses and the trees of untrodden forests. It is a matter of indifference to him whether this is so or not. Only, if it is so, he has a fine instrument ready to his hand; and in due proportion to the completeness of his indifference to it is the strength and beauty of his personal self. This is readily seen; a garden flower becomes a mere degenerate copy of itself if it is simply neglected; a plant must be cultivated to the highest pitch, and benefit by the whole of the gardener's skill, or else it must be a pure savage, wild, and fed only by the earth and sky. Who cares for any intermediate state? What value or strength is there in the neglected garden rose which has the canker in every bud? For diseased or dwarfed blossoms are sure to result from an arbitrary change of condition, resulting from the neglect of the man who has hitherto been the providence of the plant in its

unnatural life. But there are wind-blown plains where the daisies grow tall, with moon faces such as no cultivation can produce in them. Cultivate, then, to the very utmost; forget no inch of your garden ground, no smallest plant that grows in it; make no foolish pretence nor fond mistake in the fancy that you are ready to forget it, and so subject it to the frightful consequences of half-measures. The plant that is watered to-day and forgotten to-morrow must dwindle or decay. The plant that looks for no help but from Nature itself measures its strength at once, and either dies and is re-created or grows into a great tree whose boughs fill the sky. But make no mistake like the religionists and some philosophers; leave no part of yourself neglected while you know it to be yourself. While the ground is the gardener's it is his business to tend it; but some day a call may come to him from another country or from death itself, and in a moment he is no longer the gardener, his business is at an end, he has no more duty of that kind

at all. Then his favorite plants suffer and die, and the delicate ones become one with the earth. But soon fierce Nature claims the place for her own, and covers it with thick grass or giant weeds, or nurses some sapling in it till its branches shade the ground. Be warned, and tend your garden to the utmost, till you can pass away utterly and let it return to Nature and become the wind-blown plain where the wild-flowers grow. Then, if you pass that way and look at it, whatever has happened will neither grieve nor elate you. For you will be able to say, "I am the rocky ground, I am the great tree, I am the strong daisies," indifferent which it is that flourishes where once your rose-trees grew. But you must have learned to study the stars to some purpose before you dare to neglect your roses, and omit to fill the air with their cultivated fragrance. You must know your way through the trackless air, and from thence to the pure ether; you must be ready to lift the bar of the Golden Gate.

Cultivate, I say, and neglect nothing.

Only remember, all the while you tend and water, that you are impudently usurping the tasks of Nature herself. Having usurped her work, you must carry it through until you have reached a point when she has no power to punish you, when you are not afraid of her, but can with a bold front return her her own. She laughs in her sleeve, the mighty mother, watching you with covert, laughing eye, ready relentlessly to cast the whole of your work into the dust if you do but give her the chance, if you turn idler and grow careless. The idler is father of the madman in the sense that the child is the father of the man. Nature has put her vast hand on him and crushed the whole edifice. The gardener and his rose-trees are alike broken and stricken by the great storm which her movement has created; they lie helpless till the sand is swept over them and they are buried in a weary wilderness. From this desert spot Nature herself will recreate, and will use the ashes of the man who dared to face her as indifferently as

the withered leaves of his plants. His body, soul, and spirit are all alike claimed by her.

III.

The man who is strong, who has resolved to find the unknown path, takes with the utmost care every step. He utters no idle word, he does no unconsidered action, he neglects no duty or office however homely or however difficult. But while his eyes and hands and feet are thus fulfilling their tasks, new eyes and hands and feet are being born within him. For his passionate and unceasing desire is to go that way on which the subtile organs only can guide him. The physical world he has learned, and knows how to use; gradually his power is passing on, and he recognizes the psychic world. But he has to learn this world and know how to use it, and he dare not lose hold of the life he is familiar with till he has taken hold of that with which he is unfamiliar. When he has acquired such

power with his psychic organs as the infant has with its physical organs when it first opens its lungs, then is the hour for the great adventure. How little is needed —yet how much that is! The man does but need the psychic body to be formed in all parts, as is an infant's; he does but need the profound and unshakable conviction which impels the infant, that the new life is desirable. Once those conditions gained and he may let himself live in the new atmosphere and look up to the new sun. But then he must remember to check his new experience by the old. He is breathing still, though differently; he draws air into his lungs, and takes life from the sun. He has been born into the psychic world, and depends now on the psychic air and light. His goal is not here: this is but a subtile repetition of physical life; he has to pass through it according to similar laws. He must study, learn, grow, and conquer; never forgetting the while that his goal is that place where there is no air nor any sun or moon.

Do not imagine that in this line of progress the man himself is being moved or changing his place. Not so. The truest illustration of the process is that of cutting through layers of crust or skin. The man, having learned his lesson fully, casts off the physical life; having learned his lesson fully, casts off the psychic life; having learned his lesson fully, casts off the contemplative life, or life of adoration.

All are cast aside at last, and he enters the great temple where any memory of self or sensation is left outside as the shoes are cast from the feet of the worshipper. That temple is the place of his own pure divinity, the central flame which, however obscured, has animated him through all these struggles. And having found this sublime home he is sure as the heavens themselves. He remains still, filled with all knowledge and power. The outer man, the adoring, the acting, the living personification, goes its own way hand in hand with Nature, and shows all the superb strength of the savage growth of the earth, lit by that instinct

which contains knowledge. For in the inmost sanctuary, in the actual temple, the man has found the subtile essence of Nature herself. No longer can there be any difference between them or any half-measures. And now comes the hour of action and power. In that inmost sanctuary all is to be found: God and his creatures, the fiends who prey on them, those among men who have been loved, those who have been hated. Difference between them exists no longer. Then the soul of man laughs in its strength and fearlessness, and goes forth into the world in which its actions are needed, and causes these actions to take place without apprehension, alarm, fear, regret, or joy.

This state is possible to man while yet he lives in the physical; for men have attained it while living. It alone can make actions in the physical divine and true.

Life among objects of sense must forever be an outer shape to the sublime soul, — it can only become powerful life, the life of accomplishment, when it is animated by

the crowned and indifferent god that sits in the sanctuary.

The obtaining of this condition is so supremely desirable because from the moment it is entered there is no more trouble, no more anxiety, no more doubt or hesitation. As a great artist paints his picture fearlessly and never committing any error which causes him regret, so the man who has formed his inner self deals with his life.

But that is when the condition is entered. That which we who look towards the mountains hunger to know is the mode of entrance and the way to the Gate. The Gate is that Gate of Gold barred by a heavy bar of iron. The way to the threshold of it turns a man giddy and sick. It seems no path, it seems to end perpetually, its way lies along hideous precipices, it loses itself in deep waters.

Once crossed and the way found it appears wonderful that the difficulty should have looked so great. For the path where it disappears does but turn abruptly, its line upon the precipice edge is wide enough for

the feet, and across the deep waters that look so treacherous there is always a ford and a ferry. So it happens in all profound experiences of human nature. When the first grief tears the heart asunder it seems that the path has ended and a blank darkness taken the place of the sky. And yet by groping the soul passes on, and that difficult and seemingly hopeless turn in the road is passed.

So with many another form of human torture. Sometimes throughout a long period or a whole lifetime the path of existence is perpetually checked by what seem like insurmountable obstacles. Grief, pain, suffering, the loss of all that is beloved or valued, rise up before the terrified soul and check it at every turn. Who places those obstacles there? The reason shrinks at the childish dramatic picture which the religionists place before it,— God permitting the Devil to torment His creatures for their ultimate good! When will that ultimate good be attained? The idea involved in this picture supposes an end, a goal. There is

none. We can any one of us safely assent to that; for as far as human observation, reason, thought, intellect, or instinct can reach towards grasping the mystery of life, all data obtained show that the path is endless and that eternity cannot be blinked and converted by the idling soul into a million years.

In man, taken individually or as a whole, there clearly exists a double constitution. I am speaking roughly now, being well aware that the various schools of philosophy cut him up and subdivide him according to their several theories. What I mean is this: that two great tides of emotion sweep through his nature, two great forces guide his life; the one makes him an animal, and the other makes him a god. No brute of the earth is so brutal as the man who subjects his godly power to his animal power. This is a matter of course, because the whole force of the double nature is then used in one direction. The animal pure and simple obeys his instincts only and desires no more than to gratify his love of pleasure; he pays but

little regard to the existence of other beings except in so far as they offer him pleasure or pain; he knows nothing of the abstract love of cruelty or of any of those vicious tendencies of the human being which have in themselves their own gratification. Thus the man who becomes a beast has a million times the grasp of life over the natural beast, and that which in the pure animal is sufficiently innocent enjoyment, uninterrupted by an arbitrary moral standard, becomes in him vice, because it is gratified on principle. Moreover he turns all the divine powers of his being into this channel, and degrades his soul by making it the slave of his senses. The god, deformed and disguised, waits on the animal and feeds it.

Consider then whether it is not possible to change the situation. The man himself is king of the country in which this strange spectacle is seen. He allows the beast to usurp the place of the god because for the moment the beast pleases his capricious royal fancy the most. This cannot last always; why let it last any longer? So

long as the animal rules there will be the keenest sufferings in consequence of change, of the vibration between pleasure and pain, of the desire for prolonged and pleasant physical life. And the god in his capacity of servant adds a thousand-fold to all this, by making physical life so much more filled with keenness of pleasure, — rare, voluptuous, æsthetic pleasure, — and by intensity of pain so passionate that one knows not where it ends and where pleasure commences. So long as the god serves, so long the life of the animal will be enriched and increasingly valuable. But let the king resolve to change the face of his court and forcibly evict the animal from the chair of state, restoring the god to the place of divinity.

Ah, the profound peace that falls upon the palace! All is indeed changed. No longer is there the fever of personal longings or desires, no longer is there any rebellion or distress, no longer any hunger for pleasure or dread of pain. It is like a great calm descending on a stormy ocean;

it is like the soft rain of summer falling on parched ground; it is like the deep pool found amidst the weary, thirsty labyrinths of the unfriendly forest.

But there is much more than this. Not only is man more than an animal because there is the god in him, but he is more than a god because there is the animal in him.

Once force the animal into his rightful place, that of the inferior, and you find yourself in possession of a great force hitherto unsuspected and unknown. The god as servant adds a thousand-fold to the pleasures of the animal; the animal as servant adds a thousand-fold to the powers of the god. And it is upon the union, the right relation of these two forces in himself, that man stands as a strong king, and is enabled to raise his hand and lift the bar of the Golden Gate. When these forces are unfitly related, then the king is but a crowned voluptuary, without power, and whose dignity does but mock him; for the animals, undivine, at least know peace and are not torn by vice and despair.

That is the whole secret. That is what makes man strong, powerful, able to grasp heaven and earth in his hands. Do not fancy it is easily done. Do not be deluded into the idea that the religious or the virtuous man does it! Not so. They do no more than fix a standard, a routine, a law, by which they hold the animal in check. The god is compelled to serve him in a certain way, and does so, pleasing him with the beliefs and cherished fantasies of the religious, with the lofty sense of personal pride which makes the joy of the virtuous. These special and canonized vices are things too low and base to be possible to the pure animal, whose only inspirer is Nature herself, always fresh as the dawn. The god in man, degraded, is a thing unspeakable in its infamous power of production.

The animal in man, elevated, is a thing unimaginable in its great powers of service and of strength.

You forget, you who let your animal self live on, merely checked and held within certain bounds, that it is a great force, an inte-

gral portion of the animal life of the world you live in. With it you can sway men, and influence the very world itself, more or less perceptibly according to your strength. The god, given his right place, will so inspire and guide this extraordinary creature, so educate and develop it, so force it into action and recognition of its kind, that it will make you tremble when you recognize the power that has awakened within you. The animal in yourself will then be a king among the animals of the world.

This is the secret of the old-world magicians, who made Nature serve them and work miracles every day for their convenience. This is the secret of the coming race which Lord Lytton foreshadowed for us.

But this power can only be attained by giving the god the sovereignty. Make your animal ruler over yourself, and he will never rule others.

EPILOGUE.

SECRETED and hidden in the heart of the world and in the heart of man is the light which can illumine all life, the future and the past. Shall we not search for it? Surely some must do so. And then perhaps those will add what is needed to this poor fragment of thought.

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Another volume of Balzac has a timely interest from the prominence of the subject before the public. This is "Les Paysans," which is rendered in English "Sons of the Soil." It is a story of the land question in France, and appeals to that sense of the inequality of conditions as illustrated by the tenure of this sort of property which is excited by writers on the same class of subjects in this country to-day. The motto of the first chapter aptly suggests the trend of this powerful story: "Whoso land hath, contention hath."

THE HOUSE OF THE WOLFINGS. A Tale of the House of the Wolfings and all the Kindreds of the Mark, written in Prose and in Verse, by WILLIAM MORRIS, author of "The Earthly Paradise." Édition de Luxe. Limited to five hundred copies. Bound in antique style. Crown 8vo. Price, $3.00.

This is one of those rare creations of genius which reproduce the life and manners of a remote past and of peoples of a grand kind that civilization cannot assimilate. They live in the stories of their deeds; and whether these are recorded in veritable sagas, or are told by some writer of an alien race and of later times, their power over the mind is due to their adequate expression of the thoughts, experiences, and emotions of a by-gone people. And while the modern narrator lacks the control over the feelings which an ancient chronicler exerts, he may, by the exercise of his imagination and the charm of his literary art, give a peculiar attractiveness to his work. This is what William Morris has done in "The House of the Wolfings," which is especially remarkable for its essentially poetic character, although it is written in both prose and poetry. It is this vital element of power underlying the form of composition which gives the book its hold on critical appreciation.

The story of the Wolfings, a branch of the Gothic people, in their picturesque life in the woods and their struggle with the Romans, has an epic force and significance; and the way in which Thiodolf, their leader and that of their brother Mark-men, was led to sacrifice his own life in order to insure the success of his people, has a noble pathos. He had been induced by the Wood-Sun, a daughter of the god who was smitten with love for him, to wear a magic hauberk, or coat of mail, which he threw off on discovering that, while it was a sure protection for him, it would bring ruin on his folk. This was being proved by the success of the Romans, who had captured the sacred Wolfing Roof, when the Hall-Sun, the child of the two lovers, resolving to sacrifice her beloved father for his country, led him to her mother, whom she made confess the deception which she had practised to save Thiodolf's life. That warrior, roused by the emergency, marched with his hosts to the Wolfing Roof, which he recaptured from the Romans, and died from his wounds in the great hall. His death saved his people.

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